

## **Shares Memories at United Methodist Church of Bala Cynwyd**

November 8, 2009

BALA CYNWYD, PA – For the second year in a row, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) shared memories with fellow veterans and delivered an address as the keynote speaker of the Community Interfaith Tribute to Veterans held this year at the United Methodist Church of Bala Cynwyd.

“The men and women who have worn the cloth of our nation have taught us through example about the meaning of courage, sacrifice, and patriotism,” said Congressman Sestak. “It is an honor to share my experiences with other Veterans as well as listen to their reflections and concerns. I thank the United Methodist Church of Bala Cynwyd led by Reverend Alice Cook and the Planning Committee including chairman Father Elliott Waters and Randall Jefferson for this opportunity and also for its recognition of our Veterans and their families. It is vital that we continually commemorate their honorable service to our nation. Veterans and their families have endured much on our nation’s behalf.”

The ceremony included a recognition of the veterans and their families present as well and a silent tribute to those absent. In closing, it provided a forum for veterans to voice their concerns to a team of trained counselors who, in turn, composed a document to convey those concerns to elected officials and organizations who assist veterans. Music was provided by the choirs of the Country Day School of the Sacred Heart in Bryn Mawr and Bala Cynwyd Methodist Church as well as The Washington Memorial Pipe Band. Other speakers included Bishop Harold Faust, Pastor of New Hope Community Church; Ms. Cathy Santos, a Veteran; and Reverend Frank Wallner, Rector of St. John’s Episcopal Church in Lower Merion. Members of the Overbrook High School Junior ROTC were on hand to serve as the color guard for the service.

Congressman Sestak noted, “In addition to paying tribute to their service, we must also make certain that veterans of this nation are able to have an open dialogue with their government to ensure that we meet their needs. Thousands of troops are returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health issues, and more Veterans of current and past wars are falling into homelessness faster than we have seen in any prior conflicts. It is imperative that we continue to devote as many resources as possible to combating these serious problems.

“I was truly honored by the opportunity to speak to the greater Philadelphia interfaith community about our nation’s Veterans,” said Congressman Sestak. “It is a bond that stands the eternal test of time, and finds the grandest sepulcher of all—a home in the hearts of brave men and women.” “To me, Veterans Day is an opportunity to reflect on the sacrifices of those who have gone before me, and to redouble my efforts to ensure that Veterans past, present, and future are honored by thought and action for the freedoms they and their families have earned for us all.”

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, the Congressman was the first Director of Deep Blue, the Navy’s anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the Global War on Terrorism. He served as President Clintons Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Congressman Sestak is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.*